



## State of Utah

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## MEMORANDUM

Date: October 16, 2008  
To: Regional Advisory Council Members  
From: Anis Aoude, Big Game Coordinator  
SUBJECT: Overview of 2009 Big Game Proclamation and Rule Recommendations

The attached documents summarize the Wildlife Division's recommended changes to the current Big Game Proclamation and Rule.

### Deer hunter survey:

With the statewide deer management plan coming up for review, the Utah Division of Wildlife Resources was interested in obtaining public input to incorporate into the plan. To do this, we initiated a survey of deer hunters in Utah in July 2008. The survey was designed to get input from hunters on their past and present hunting experiences as well as hunter input on possible future management options. The survey was internet based and sent to a random sample of anyone who applied for a permit for the 2008 hunting season or purchased an over the counter (leftover) permit in 2007. The sample was stratified into groups by hunt type (limited entry or general season), weapon type, and region so we could get input from a wide array of hunters. Overall, we sampled a total of 18,453 applicants/hunters and received responses from 8,612 (47% response rate). Summary results indicate that the social aspects play a large role in hunting in Utah, hunters would like to see more and bigger bucks, but most people are not willing to give up hunting every year, and overall hunter satisfaction is high under the current management system. Specific results from questions relating to why people hunt mule deer, where people hunt, crowding issues, future management options, and hunter satisfaction will be presented at the meetings.

### The statewide deer plan revision:

The statewide deer plan has expired and we needed to revise it. We assembled a committee that included representatives from most interested parties. The committee met a total of 6 times and came up with the following goals, objectives and recommendations:

- **Population Management Goal:** Expand and improve mule deer populations throughout the state within the carrying capacity of available habitats and in consideration of other land uses.
  - **Population Objective:** By 2013, increase the statewide mule deer population by 50,000 to an estimated post-season herd size of 350,000.
- **Habitat Goal:** Conserve and improve mule deer habitat throughout the state with emphasis on crucial ranges.
  - **Habitat Objective 1:** Maintain mule deer habitat throughout the state by protecting and enhancing existing crucial habitats and mitigating for losses due to natural and human impacts.

- **Habitat Objective 2:** Improve the quality and quantity of vegetation for mule deer on a minimum of 500,000 acres of crucial range by 2013.
- **Recreation Goal:** Provide a diversity of high-quality hunting and viewing opportunities for mule deer throughout the state.
  - **Recreation Objective 1:** Maintain a hunting program for mule deer that encourages a variety of quality hunting opportunities while maintaining population objectives.
  - **Recreation Objective 2:** Increase opportunities for viewing of mule deer while educating the public concerning the needs of deer and the importance of habitat.
- **General season management:** Manage for a 3-year average of 15–25 bucks/ 100 does and a 9-day long any weapon season.
  - If a unit/subunit in a given region falls below a 3-year average of 15 bucks/100 does, the season length for that unit/subunit will be shortened to 5 days in the following hunting season.
  - If a unit/subunit in a given region falls below a 3-year average of 10 bucks/100 does, that unit/subunit will be managed on a limited entry basis in the following hunting season.
- **Limited entry management:** Manage for a 3-year average of 25–35 bucks/100 does
  - If the buck:doe ratio exceeds 35 bucks/100 does, limited entry permits will be increased. If buck:doe ratios fall below 25, permits will be decreased.
- **Premium limited entry management:** Manage for a 3-year average of 40–50 bucks/100 does and 30–40% of the harvested deer being 5 years of age or older.
  - Establish management buck hunts on these units to provide additional hunting opportunity
  - If the 3-year average buck:doe ratio exceeds 50/100, management buck permits will be increased.
  - If >40% of the harvested bucks (3-year average) are 5 years of age or older, premium limited entry permits will be increased. If <30% of the harvested bucks (3-year average) are 5 years of age or older, premium limited entry permits will be decreased.

#### **Big Game Proclamation and Rule changes:**

- 1) We recommend a 9 day General Rifle Deer Season statewide and a 5 day season for the 5 units that fall below 15 bucks per 100 does. Those 5 units are: South Slope Vernal, LaSal, Nebo, Oquirrh Stansburry and Monroe.
- 2) To deal with the perception of hunter crowding in the Southern Region during the archery season, we are recommending leaving the archery cap at 16,000.

We are also recommending that archers will have to choose a region to hunt until Sept. 1, after which they can hunt statewide. We are recommending no regional cap for archery. This will allow the Division to gather more precise data on what region hunters are choosing during the early part of the season.

- 3) We recommend continuing the Deer-Elk Combo hunt in the Northern Region. This hunt was instituted to alleviate hunter crowding issues on public land units in the Northern Region. Permit numbers will be set in March once we have the results from our harvest survey.
- 3) We recommend adding a new LaSal Dolores Triangle archery hunt, dates: 11/07 -- 11/20.
- 4) We recommend adding Management Deer hunts on the Paunsaugunt and Henry Mountains units. This will be a primitive weapons hunt, dates: 11/7 – 11/11.
- 5) We recommend expanding the statewide spike hunt to include all Limited Entry Units. We recommend the permit numbers be increased from 11,000 to 17,000.
- 6) We recommend shortening the Limited Entry Elk rifle hunt from 11 days to 9 days to make it consistent with the muzzleloader hunt and allow for a two day gap between the rifle and muzzleloader hunt
- 7) We recommend discontinuing with the Management Bull Elk hunts
- 8) We recommend adding a General Season Any Bull Unit in San Juan County to deal with substantial depredation problems. This area is primarily private land and is not currently open to elk hunting.
- 9) We recommend continuing the mid-November youth rifle elk hunt on the South Slope, Bonanza Unit in the Northeastern Region to harvest bulls that live on private land during the Any Bull General Season and become available for harvest on public land in mid-November. This hunt helps alleviate depredations problems caused by elk in this area.
- 10) We recommend closing the Wasatch bighorn sheep hunt.
- 11) We recommend changing the Newfoundland bighorn sheep unit boundary to incorporate a larger area
- 12) We recommend a nanny goat hunt on the Beaver Unit